

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RIYADH 00393 251159Z
ACTION NEA-11

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FM USLO RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 491
INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE RIYADH 393

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC (MACDONALD, JOHN L.)
SUBJECT: JOHN MACDONALD

REF STATE 129491 ET AL

1. DURING MEETING MAY 24 WITH DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERIOR DR. IBRAHIM AL AWAJI, AWAJI VOLUNTEERED THAT THE MACDONALD CASE WAS CAUSING HIM MUCH CONCERN. HE SAID SAG WAS VERY PLEASED WITH STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON MACDONALD CASE. NOTING THAT HE WAS SPEAKING UNOFFICIALLY, HE SAID GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HAVE ASKED FOR A BETTER EXPLANATION OF CASE. HE SAID OTHER OFFICIALS IN MINISTRY WERE EQUALLY PLEASED.

2. AL AWAJI THEN ADDED THAT HE WAS SORRY THAT SUCH FALSEHOODS AND WRONG ACCUSATIONS HAD RECEIVED SO MUCH ADVERSE PUBLICITY. BOTH SAG AND US, HE KNEW, WISHED AVOID SUCH PROBLEMS. IN THIS CASE AL AWAJI POINTED OUT THAT YOUNG SAUDI IN EASTERN PROVINCE HAD GUARANTEED MACDONALD'S PRESENCE IN KINGDOM AND NOW HE WAS IN TROUBLE WITH SAUDI AUTHORITIES FOR HIS PURELY HUMANITARIAN GESTURE. AL AWAJI CONCLUDED THAT SAUDIS LIKED WORKING WITH AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN BECAUSE THEY DEALT SQUARELY AND FAIRLY. MACDONALD, HE SAID, WAS NOT IN THIS GROUP.
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3. IN CLOSING AL AWAJI NOTED WITH SOME SURPRISE THAT MACDONALD HAD BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN A SECOND PASSPORT SO EASILY. WE EXPLAINED, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY, THAT USG CANNOT AS A MATTER OF COURSE DENY AN AMERICAN A PASSPORT. ANY AMERICAN IN THE KINGDOM REQUESTING ONE WILL GET ONE. IT IS UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL, HOWEVER, TO GET HIS SAUDI EXIT VISA. WE NOTED THAT

SOMEONE HAD ASSISTED MACDONALD IN DEPARTING KINGDOM. AL AWAJI SAID THERE WERE ALWAYS PEOPLE WHO WOULD HELP IF THE PRICE WERE RIGHT.

4. COMMENT: SAUDIS, LIKE MOST PEOPLE, DO NOT LIKE ADVERSE PUBLICITY. WE WERE SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY AL AWAJI'S KNOWLEDGE OF CASE SINCE WE HAD BEEN TOLD PREVIOUSLY THAT MACDONALD'S CASE AS A COMMERCIAL DISPUTE WAS BEFORE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, NOT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.
GNEHM

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